CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An output device selection system which communicably connects a plurality of output devices and selects one of the plurality of output devices to produce output, wherein:

a first output device from among the plurality of output devices comprises a specialized output data receiving section for receiving specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the first output device, and an output section for producing output based on the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving section;

the output device selection system comprises an output device selection section for selecting a destination output device from among the plurality of output devices, and an intermediate output data transfer section for transferring intermediate output data of the specialized output data to the output device selected by the output device selection section; and

a second output device other than the first output device from among the plurality of output devices comprises an intermediate output data receiving section for receiving the intermediate output data, an inverse data conversion section for converting the intermediate output data received by the intermediate output data receiving section into specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the second output device, and an output section for producing output based on the specialized output data produced by the inverse data conversion section.

2. An output device selection system which communicably connects a plurality of output devices and selects one of the plurality of output devices to produce output, wherein:

a first output device from among the plurality of output devices comprises a specialized output data receiving section for receiving specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the first output device, a data conversion section for converting the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving section into intermediate output data, an output section for producing output based on the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving section, an output device selection section for selecting a destination output device from among the plurality of output devices, and an intermediate output data transfer section for transferring the intermediate output data produced by the data conversion section to the output device selected by the output device selection section; and

a second output device other than the first output device from among the plurality of output devices comprises an intermediate output data receiving section for receiving the intermediate output data, an inverse data conversion section for converting the intermediate output data received by the intermediate output data receiving section into specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the second output device, and an output section for producing output based on the specialized output data produced by the inverse data conversion section.

3. A printer selection system which communicably connects a plurality of network printers and selects one of the plurality of network printers in response to a print request from a print request terminal, wherein:

the network printer comprises a specialized print data receiving section for receiving specialized print data in a print format which can be printed by devices of the same type as the one network printer, a data conversion section for converting the specialized print data received by the specialized print data receiving section into intermediate print data, a network printer selection section for selecting a destination network printer from among the plurality of network printers, an intermediate print data transfer section for transferring the intermediate print data produced by the data conversion section to the network printer selected by the network printer selection section, an intermediate print data receiving section for receiving the intermediate print data, an inverse data conversion section for converting the intermediate print data received by the intermediate print data receiving section into the specialized print data, and a printing section for printing based on at least one of the specialized print data received by the specialized print data receiving section and the specialized print data produced by the inverse data conversion section; and

the data conversion section, the network printer selection section, and the intermediate print data transfer section operate based on predetermined printing conditions.

4. The printer selection system according to claim 3, wherein:

the specialized print data contains the printing conditions;

if the printing conditions contained in the specialized print data received by the specialized print data receiving section indicate that another one of the network printers should be used for printing, the data conversion section, the network printer selection section, and the intermediate print data transfer section operate based on the received printing conditions; and

if the printing conditions contained in the specialized print data received by the specialized print data receiving section indicate that the local network printer should be used for printing, the printing section does printing based on the received specialized print data.

5. The printer selection system according to claim 4, wherein:

if the printing conditions contained in the specialized print data received by the specialized print data receiving section indicate that another one of the network printers should be used for printing, the network printer selection section selects the network printer indicated by the printing conditions from among the plurality of network printers.

6. The printer selection system according to claim 4, wherein:

the printer selection system maintains selection conditions for the network printer; and

the network printer selection section selects a destination network printer from among the plurality of network printers based on the selection conditions.

7. The printer selection system according to claim 5, wherein:

the intermediate print data contains the printing conditions; and

if the printing conditions contained in the intermediate print data received by the intermediate print data receiving section indicate that the local network printer should be used for printing, the inverse data conversion section and the printing section operate based on the received intermediate print data.

8. The printer selection system according to claim 3, wherein:

when transferring print data to the other network printer, the specialized print data is transferred without conversion by the data conversion section if the destination network printer is of the same type as the local network printer.

9. A printer selection system which communicably connects a plurality of network printers with a print request terminal and selects one of the plurality of network printers in response to a print request from the print request terminal, wherein:

the print request terminal comprises an intermediate print data generating section for generating intermediate print data, and an intermediate print data sending section for sending the

intermediate print data generated by the intermediate print data generating section to one of the plurality of network printers;

the network printer comprises an intermediate print data receiving section for receiving intermediate print data, an intermediate print data transfer section for transferring the intermediate print data received by the intermediate print data receiving section to another network printer, an inverse data conversion section for converting the intermediate print data received by the intermediate print data receiving section into specialized print data in a print format which can be printed by devices of the same type as the one network printer, and a printing section for printing based on the specialized print data produced by the inverse data conversion section; and

the intermediate print data transfer section operates based on predetermined printing conditions.

10. An output device which communicably connects with a plurality of output devices, comprising:

a specialized output data receiving section for receiving specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the output device, a data conversion section for converting the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving section into intermediate output data, an output section for producing output based on the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving section, an output device selection section for selecting a destination output device from among the plurality of output devices, and an intermediate output data transfer section for

transferring intermediate output data produced by the data conversion section to the output device selected by the output device selection section.

11. An output device which communicably connects with a plurality of output devices, comprising:

an intermediate output data receiving section for receiving intermediate output data, an inverse data conversion section for converting the intermediate output data received by the intermediate output data receiving section into specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as this output device, and an output section for producing output based on the specialized output data produced by the inverse data conversion section.

12. A computer having a program for an output device which communicably connects with a plurality of output devices, wherein the program makes the computer execute processes to be implemented as:

a specialized output data receiving section for receiving specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the computer, a data conversion section for converting the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving section into intermediate output data, an output device selection section for selecting a destination output device from among the plurality of output devices, and an intermediate output data transfer section for transferring intermediate output data produced by the data conversion section

to the output device selected by the output device selection section.

13. A computer having a program for an output device which communicably connects with a plurality of output devices, wherein the program makes the computer execute processes to be implemented as:

an intermediate output data receiving section for receiving intermediate output data, an inverse data conversion section for converting the intermediate output data received by the intermediate output data receiving section into specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the computer.

14. An output device selection method for communicably connecting a plurality of output devices and selecting one of the plurality of output devices to produce output, wherein:

for a first output device from among the plurality of output devices, the output device selection method comprises:

a specialized output data receiving step of receiving specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the first output device, and

an output step of producing output based on the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving step;

the output device selection method further comprises:

an output device selection step of selecting a destination output device from among the plurality of output devices, and

an intermediate output data transfer step of transferring intermediate output data of the specialized output data to the output device selected by the output device selection step; and

for a second output device other than the first output device from among the plurality of output devices, the output device selection method comprises:

an intermediate output data receiving step of receiving the intermediate output data,

an inverse data conversion step of converting the intermediate output data received by the intermediate output data receiving step into specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the second output device, and

an output step of producing output based on the specialized output data produced by the inverse data conversion step.

15. An output device selection method for communicably connecting a plurality of output devices and selecting one of the plurality of output devices to produce output, wherein:

for a first output device from among the plurality of output devices, the output device selection method comprises:

a specialized output data receiving step of receiving specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the first output device,

a data conversion step of converting the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving step into intermediate output data if the specialized output data received

by the specialized output data receiving step is to be output from another output device,

an output device selection step of selecting a destination output device from among the plurality of output devices,

an intermediate output data transfer step of transferring the intermediate output data produced by the data conversion step to the output device selected by the output device selection step, and

an output step of producing output based on the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving step if the specialized output data received by the specialized output data receiving step is to be output from the first output device; and

for a second output device other than the first output device from among the plurality of output devices, the output device selection method comprises:

an intermediate output data receiving step of receiving the intermediate output data,

an inverse data conversion step of converting the intermediate output data received by the intermediate output data receiving step into specialized output data in an output format which can be output by devices of the same type as the second output device, and

an output step of producing output based on the specialized output data produced by the inverse data conversion step.